Oral Family History

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While I was researching my family history, I was able to uncover very important information that helps me better understand the make up of my family. As I have many family members who have passed on, it is difficult for me to go very far back, but through interviews with my parents, I have been able to uncover important information of my family as far back as we can go. I have found that my family really does come from everywhere. It is interesting to know not only the facts, but also the reasons behind some of the choices my family made that led them to where they are today.

Family from my father’s side is from Juarez, Mexico. My grandfather, Ignacio Porchas, and my grandmother, Guadalupe Ramos, both experienced living very poor childhoods in Juarez. My grandmother always tells the story of how she would sell tortillas to make money for her family when she was young. Neither of my grandparents on my father’s side finished elementary school, so when they married and had children they had the desire like so many others to move to the United States to provide a better life for their children. When they reached the U.S. with my father and their four other children, they were not rich by any means and still had to work to make it in the small town of Alamogordo, New Mexico. It is wonderful to know that all of their five children went on to be successful United States citizens, all graduating from high school and obtaining good jobs to support their families.

On the other hand, my mother’s side has a lot of diversity as well. My grandmother, Pamelia “Donna” Maynard, came from Cornerbrook, Newfoundland, Canada. She lived a life that was very different then my grandparents on my father’s side. She attended Catholic School and graduated from high school. Not only was her upbringing different, but also the environment in which she was raised was completely opposite of the dry dessert home of my father’s parents. However, they both came to the United States from another country. She came to the United States when she married my grandfather, Bill Sweatman, who was in the military and stationed in Canada where they met. When they reached the states, they lived in many places due to their military lifestyle. On one of those stops in Bossier City, Louisiana, my mother Angela, their third child, was born. They were finally stationed at Holloman Air Force Base in Alamogordo, New Mexico. My grandfather and grandmother eventually divorced, and my grandmother who fell in love with the mild weather of New Mexico remained there to raise her children as a single mom. They struggled with money as well, but had a very rich life full of happiness. We later reconnected with my grandfather’s family who live in Opelika, Alabama. I learned that almost all of the men in that family served in the military, some being sent to war in Vietnam and experiencing the tribulations of that time. In my opinion, it truly is fate that both sets of my grandparents ended up in Alamogordo, where my parents met.

My parents were married on November 14, 1984. They took time to work on their careers, and establish themselves in the community. My Dad work at Culligan as a water softener technician, and my mom worked at a bank in various positions. I think that it is interesting that my mother explains that her ambitions during that time were to be a wife and mother. It does not seem that college was expected to be pursued as it is now. After taking their four years to establish stability, they had a little girl on April 27, 1988, that was me. I grew up with a mixture of cultures surrounding me. While my mother worked, my grandmother on my father’s side watched me. I grew up listening to everything Spanish, yet never learned to speak it, as my grandparents wanted to speak better English and practiced with me. When I was six years old, my parents had my little brother, Rio. He and I were both baptized and raised Catholic and brought up in our culturally diverse family. Throughout going to school, my mom decided that she wanted to be a teacher and went back to college, becoming the first graduate of college with a bachelor’s degree in my entire family.

I have found through my research that my family is very diverse and can connect me to many parts of history. I can connect to the various cultures that my family comes from as well as connect to their situations at the times in which they can experienced significant events. I have found that using my own family can connect me to history on a more meaningful level, through the fact that my family has lived through many important times in history. Through the wars that my military family members fought in, to the immigration of my grandparents, and the familiar life of my parents in my hometown, I can better understand history by talking to those who lived through it which makes it far more personal and telling.